Book Reviews


This is a comprehensive dictionary of German and English medical terms. It will prove of invaluable help to those with a working knowledge of German who wish to keep abreast of German medical literature but are unfamiliar with medical terminology. The authors have succeeded in including the major part of the vocabulary of medicine.


This is a collection of papers on perinatal problems read at a combined conference of obstetricians and paediatricians.

The first paper by H. Wulf surveys recent knowledge of perinatal physiology. He begins by describing the influence of maternal and placental steroid hormones on the development of the fetal sex and suprarenal glands, and the practical application of this by quantitative differential assay of oestriol and of chorionic gonadotrophins in the urine in monitoring the state of the uterus. He then discusses the transplacental transfer of immune bodies and the implications of this both for mother and fetus, reviews the circulatory changes during birth, and follows with an account of the biochemical changes that accompany the initiation of respiration with emphasis on blood, gas, tension, and metabolic acidosis.

Fischer and Thews describe a study of the oxygen supply of the fetal brain during labour. This paper is highly theoretical. Their conclusions depend not only on taking into account the oxygen saturation values of arterial and venous blood of fetal lambs on readings obtained from blood samples taken during labour from the fetal scalp, but on complex mathematical calculations relating to the radius of a tissue cylinder of blood supplied by a central capillary. The practical conclusion of the paper is that the duration of the second part of labour should be kept as short as possible. Huntingford from the United Kingdom gives a résumé of the perinatal mortality survey in England, Scotland, and Wales which will be familiar to British readers.

Schulte's paper is a prolonged follow-up study of full-term children showing evidence of cerebral damage in the neonatal period both due to cerebral and extracerebral causes.

Next, Koller and Koller Brenk describe the working of their resuscitation unit in Basel, which includes well-illustrated tables, diagrams, and statistics. The results and figures are comparable with those of similar special care baby units in this country. Gamp and Keavella describe an ingenious method of an external, intermittent vacuum determined artificial respiration, used in conjunction with an Isollette incubator rather on the principle of an iron lung, which they put forward as an alternative to intermittent positive pressure respiration and not necessitating endotracheal incubation. Many complications including the possibility of obstruction of the respiratory airways, and greater difficulty in nursing make it unlikely that this method will be of great value.

There follow three papers by Beck, Everbeck, and Badmann, respectively, on resuscitation of the asphyxiated newborn, the management of respiratory distress, and the care and management of at-risk infants during the first few days of life. These three papers illustrate aptly the rapidly changing pattern in neonatal care as new knowledge is gathered and fresh experience gained, which make many methods advocated in the papers appear obsolete already. For instance, there are constant modifications in infant respirators coming on the market, and the Bennett respirator widely used in the United Kingdom is not mentioned at all. The authors lay great stress on the use of intravenous therapy, the use of trometamol (Tris and THAM) to correct metabolic acidosis, and the use of orciprenaline in the management of asphyxiated infants, methods which many advanced British centres have now abandoned in favour of greater use of intermittent positive pressure respiration and of early oral feeding. The routine use of y-globulins in such cases requiring exchange transfusion is likewise strange to British readers, as is the routine use of large doses of prednisone in the treatment of neonatal jaundice. However, the reader will find little to disagree with in the description of the management of infants with diabetic mothers or of other neonatal emergencies.

The second part of the book is devoted to papers concerned with the problems of breast-feeding. The subject is started off by Hütter who discusses physiology of lactation, breast development, and comparative anatomy of the breast and its hormonal control. Kute views the subject from the obstetric point of view. Surprisingly
he finds 96% of all expectant mothers expressing a willingness to breast feed but, as in all other western countries, only 37% of them are actually doing so at the end of two months. Women of a higher social strata are more likely to breast feed than those in a lower strata. Von Harnach from the paediatric aspect finds a significantly lower incidence of respiratory infection amongst breast-fed infants. Weiner in a paper on plasma biochemical findings comparing breast-fed and bottle-fed infants finds no material difference between the two groups. Finally, Krieg and Cretius describe their experience with the rooming-in system, and come out in favour of a modified system where the infants can be moved to the nursery at night. The papers are all comprehensive and enough information for a large textbook is packed into a few pages. This makes for heavy reading.


This symposium was held in Gröningen in May 1967, and organized on similar lines to the earlier symposium in Gröningen in 1964. Some 60 workers from Europe and America and one each from Beirut and Cairo took part. Sessions were devoted to: (1) role of the placenta; (2) assessment of fetal development; (3) experimental aspects of dysmaturity; (4) hereditary and environmental aspects of low birthweight; (5) adaptation of the low birthweight infant to extrauterine life; (6) obstetrical and preventive aspects of dysmaturity; (7) developmental aspects.

After years of neglect, the growth of the fetus has become a subject of intense interest, and it is encouraging to see in the papers here presented the ingenuity being displayed by many of those who are seeking means of overcoming the formidable obstacles intervening between the fetus and those who would study it. Any student of fetal growth will want to have a copy of this book, which contains much data from both clinical and experimental sources, not readily available elsewhere.

The discussions, though doubtless worth while to the participants at the time, seem of less value when in cold print. The current vogue for publishing verbatim the discussions that take place at meetings of this kind, laudatory remarks and all, should surely be questioned.


Here is yet another of this monumental nine-volume Handbook series. To begin with, a warning to the uninitiated: a Handbuch is a book which cannot be held in one hand. This one weighs 3515 g.

Several of the series have already been reviewed in the Archives. This impressive tome is edited by Drs. H. Opitz and F. Schmid and written by 58 contributors from Germany, Switzerland, Italy, Sweden, Holland, and Austria. The first part (613 pages) deals with diseases of muscles, bones, joints, and connective tissue: the second (578 pages) with abnormalities of blood cells, haemoglobin, clotting factors, and the reticuloses. Each part opens with excellent reviews of the embryology, physiology, molecular biology, anatomy, microscopy (light and electron), and genetic aspects of the subject. The areas covered are vast, the treatment in depth is staggering, and no serious criticism is called for. To the all-rounder, many of the more esoteric enzyme systems, the molecular structure and the phylo- and ontogenetic aspects of, for instance, the red cells, are bewildering. The editors themselves admit that the clinician is threatened with incomprehension when faced with some of the research haematologist's speculations. A striking example—by no less an authority than Professor Jonxis—appears on pages 654 and 656, both of which are covered with hieroglyphics representing the 141 amino acids making up the α chain, and the 146 acids making up the β-polypeptide change of the haem molecule. Most impressive.

Obviously anyone can pick a few holes here and there: why no mention of the hypoplastic type of achondroplasia? why no account of the Ellis-van Creveld syndrome? It is, in fact, mentioned in the differential diagnosis of six congenital bone abnormalities. Perhaps a full description can be found in another volume but, if so, which? Why no account of dermatomyositis? The condition is referred to eight times in the index. Two of these references are misprints—dermatomyositis does not appear on page 997 or 1004. The others refer to differential diagnostic points, not to the disease itself. A further odd illogicality: though there are 19 references to erythroblastosis and kernicterus in the index (one on page 999, is another misprint—no mention of the disease on that page), a full description of this disease is not to be found in this volume at all: it will appear in volume 1, which deals with growth and development!

This type of book is tremendous fun to dip into or ‘read up’ in, but to review it is a daunting task. In addition there is always the nagging doubt about the cost-benefit of such a monster compilation. Particularly when one remembers the vast advances in paediatric knowledge during the past decade; how out of date will these nine volumes be in 1978? Still, one is impressed. Impressed by the width and depth of learning, by the beautiful print, lay-out, illustrations, and binding, and last, but not least, by the staggering price.


Dr. Paul Sandifer’s premature death deprived his colleagues of a highly respected and well-loved neurologist. His loss was probably felt most keenly by orthopaedic surgeons and paediatricians with whom he had worked so closely.

This small volume contains brief descriptions of a